



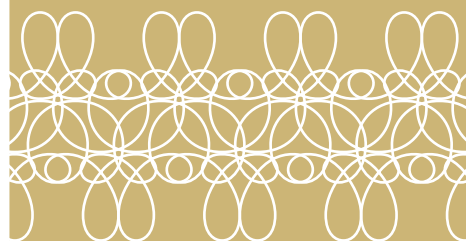
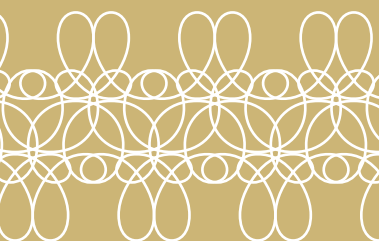
THE

# Hungarian Historical Review

NEW SERIES OF ACTA HISTORICA  
ACADEMIÆ SCIENTIARUM HUNGARICÆ  
*Early Humanism in Hungary  
and in East Central Europe*

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## *Early Humanism in Hungary and in East Central Europe*

Farkas Gábor Kiss  
Special Editor of the Thematic Issue

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## The Work Ethic in Humanist Biographies: The Case of Willem Canter

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This article is a case study of the work ethic as represented in biographies of humanists. It draws first and foremost on Melchior Adam's anthology of biographies of learned "German" men of 1615–1620. The analysis of some of the longer biographies reveals that Adam was more dependent on his sources than previous research supposed. Moreover, the stress on the education and diligence of the individuals in several of the biographies follows not from Adam's interests, but rather from the logic of humanist biographies, a primary function of which was to legitimate social rise, redefine social values according to meritocratic principles, and promote the Renaissance ideology of virtue. The *vita* of William Canter, which I analyze in considerable detail, illustrates how early modern biographies tended to construct the self on the basis of ancient and more recent clichés and to present ideal types. The work ethic represented by Canter's scholarly persona reveals that hard work in the Renaissance was intrinsically linked to disciplined time-management.

Keywords: Canter, Adam, the work ethic, Renaissance, biography

The memory of the great Dutch humanist Willem Canter (Gulielmus Canterus) (1542–1575) has been preserved primarily in his numerous philological publications, which were the products of a short but assiduous life. Canter authored innumerable editions and translations, primarily of works by Greek authors, including for instance translations of all the dramas of Euripides, Sophocles, and Aeschylus into Latin. His attitude to text edition and the use of critical apparatus was exemplary in terms of sixteenth-century scholarship. In fact, Canter not only published several first-rate Greek poets and prose writers, relying on as many manuscripts as the Republic of Letters could provide him, but was also the author of a practical handbook on the *ars corrigendi* of Greek texts, which was a great deal more useful than either of the other two that appeared in the sixteenth century.<sup>1</sup> It was a practical guide which offered a wealth of examples of the ways in which Greek texts, from single letters

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1 Gulielmus Canterus, "De ratione emendandi Graecos auctores syntagma," attached as an appendix to the third edition of his "Novae lectiones": Canterus, *Novarum lectionum*. See Almási and Kiss, "In search of Sambucus," 114–15.

to whole words, were usually corrupted by scribes. Since most of his letters were lost, everything we know of his life comes from a single source, Melchior Adam's biographical anthology from 1615. Adam's detailed biography presents Canter as a scholar-monk who shunned human company, parties, and women and who dedicated most of his time to philological studies. This article will focus on this particular biography and will attempt to understand its relation to Adam's biographical anthology, explain its constructed nature, and fit it into the humanist biographical tradition as an illustration of the importance of the work ethic to the humanist ethos.

### *Melchior Adam's Biographies of Learned Men*

Melchior Adam (1575–1622) was not simply an archetypal figure of German *Späthumanismus*. He was one of its crowning figures. Most importantly, Adam is known because of his huge anthology of the biographies of 546 German intellectuals living in the long sixteenth century (c. 1480–1620). His lives preserved the memory of a cultural epoch (Renaissance humanism) which in the 1610s was rapidly waning.<sup>2</sup> In certain ways, it was a pioneering work in the biographical tradition and a substantial contribution to posterity's image of late flourishing of classical learning within a thriving Republic of Letters in Central Europe. Yet it was not only a monument to the Republic of Letters and a strong expression of its virtue and communal spirit, but also a study on the uses of culture and learning in general. In Adam's own words, his goal was to promulgate the glory of great men, provide examples of virtue and learning, and extoll his fatherland.<sup>3</sup> He divided his work into five volumes according to the academic faculties: the *vitae* of "philosophers" (i.e. humanists) appeared first in 1615 and was followed by volumes on physicians, theologians, and jurists-politicians in 1620.<sup>4</sup> While most of the biographies are only a few pages long, in a number of

2 I am referring to Erich Trunz's research, for instance his "Der deutsche Späthumanismus." Trunz inspired several others, see Fleischer, *Späthumanismus in Schlesien*, and Fleischer's *The Harvest of Humanism*, which contains the first modern article about Adam by Weiss, "The Harvest of German Humanism." On Adam's *Vitae*, see also Seidel, "Melchior Adams *Vitae*," idem, "Die Paracelsus-Biographie," idem, "Melchior Adam"; Werle, "Melchior Adams Gelehrtenbiographien"; Beims, "Von den Grenzen einer frühneuzeitlichen Biographie." I would like to thank Robert Seidel for sending me his articles on Adam.

3 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, )( 3r. Although Germany has always been considered his fatherland, on the next page Adam names Silesia as his *dulcissima patria*.

4 The lives were mostly organized chronologically according to the date of the deaths of the individuals. The volumes appeared contemporaneously in Heidelberg and Frankfurt. Note that in 1618, a volume

cases we have lengthy and nuanced reconstructions rich with vivid detail, which add real value to Adam's work.<sup>5</sup>

Overall, Adam's collective bibliographies represented a new direction in history writing, even if he drew on certain classical and Renaissance precedents.<sup>6</sup> He opened the dedication of the volume on theologians with the claim that histories on the lives of individuals offer as much entertainment and knowledge of the past as do universal, ecclesiastical, or political histories. He recognized that the art of biography writing went back to Old Testament times and indeed that the Gospels themselves fell into the category of biography.<sup>7</sup> The several Christian forerunners mentioned in the preface include Isidore of Seville and Gennadius of Massilia, followed by Philo, Plutarch, Diogenes Laërtius, and other minor Greek authors. Curiously, Latin writers, most importantly Suetonius, and Renaissance forerunners, are missing. Adam's attention shifts instead from Greek authors to learned rulers, mentioning, for example, Matthias Corvinus just before Cyrus. Adam uses this rather sketchy and superficial historical overview of the genre of the biography only to make the claim that he has been following a long tradition. He started collecting documents concerning the lives of some German men, a job he felt he had to do as a duty to the "common fatherland," simply by drawing on the example of authors from antiquity.<sup>8</sup> Yet his heroes are not the usual *virī illustri*, distinguished by wealth, success, or political-military achievements. At most, they vaguely resemble the "philosophers" described by Diogenes Laërtius, but they are neither necessarily famous nor successful: "a few years ago, I started collecting here and there some men born in our Germany

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on non-German theologians was also published. Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*; idem, *Decades duae*; idem, *Vitae Germanorum medicorum*; idem, *Vitae Germanorum iureconsultorum et politicorum*; idem, *Vitae Germanorum Theologorum*. See their digital edition on <https://www2.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camenaref/adam.html#werk> (accessed on September 9, 2019).

5 See note 34.

6 On the latter, see most importantly Weiss, *Humanist Biography*, and Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen*.

7 Cf. with Weber Votaw, "The Gospels and Contemporary Biographies"; Dihle, *Studien zur griechischen Biographie*; idem, "The Gospels and Greek Biography"; Keener, *Christobiography*, which also provides an overview of the genre of the in antiquity.

8 In reality, Adam was probably more influenced by his immediate forerunners, like the *Icones* by Nicolaus Reusner or Johannes Sambucus (who both published collective portrait albums accompanied by poems), Conrad Gesner's *Bibliotheca universalis*, and Heinrich Pantaleon's three-volume *Prosopographiae heroum atque illustrium virorum totius Germaniae* (1565–1566), as pointed out by Seidel, "Melchior Adams *Vitae*," 186–88. The most immediate influence, however, could have been Aubertus Miraeus's *Elogia Belgica*, see notes 55–57.

commended either by their great learning or their merits in the Church of God or in the Christian Republic, joining them together in a single corpus [of lives].”<sup>9</sup>

Although we have no comprehensive study of the methods on which Adam based his selection, his irenic stance has justly been underlined.<sup>10</sup> One of the factors which was certainly highly important for him was the supra-confessional character of his selection. When picking the men to be included (there is only a single woman), he allegedly considered only their “proven virtues” and “orthodox religion.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, through his selection of men of different religious groups, Adam was offering a new definition of orthodoxy which was certainly anti-papal and gravitated towards Philippism, but which was not reduced to any confessional group. Overall, he promoted an Erasmian *via media*, believing principally in good morals and learning as the true foundations of religious life. Equally important, however, was another, more secular message of Adam’s *Vitae*, which concerned the significance of virtue and erudition; his main criteria of glory (i.e. inclusion) were the individuals’ education, learning, and virtuous life. In this sense, his *virii illustri* constituted a peculiar, meritocratic society of learned men, in which one found one’s place not because of descent, authority, or on the battlefield deeds, but solely due to one’s own efforts and labors, which were done in the interest of the common good, i.e. the growth of learning and general welfare. This was true even of the volume of “politicians” and “jurists,” who were typically people with some legal education, some of whom had had careers in politics.

The principal questions addressed in the earlier scholarship concerned Adam’s credibility and methods. How reliable are his biographies as historical sources? How did he work?<sup>12</sup> In attempting to offer an answer to these questions, Robert Seidel contrasted Adam’s professed aim to stay close to his sources and provide a balanced assessment based on multiple historical documents with his apparently uncritical and incoherent working method. Although Adam presented himself as a simple compiler and affirmed that “nothing is mine here and nothing is meant to be mine, except for collecting, ordering, and some stylistic polishing,” he also acknowledged the problem of the scarcity and reliability of his sources and their general tendency, as a response to the expectation of his

9 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum Theologorum*, )( 4<sup>r</sup>.

10 Most importantly by Weiss, “The Harvest.”

11 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum Theologorum*, )( 4<sup>r</sup>.

12 See Seidel, “Melchior Adams *Vitae*”; Werle, “Melchior Adams Gelehrtenbiographien”; and Beims, “Von den Grenzen.”

times, to eulogize.<sup>13</sup> To be sure, he worked diligently on his magnum opus, and he attempted to collect and read all relevant sources available to him, which were many in number, since he had access to the Bibliotheca Palatina.<sup>14</sup> Still, he obviously did not always live up to his own scholarly expectations, and he often relied on a single source, copying it uncritically.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, it appears that he was neither able nor wanted to work against the panegyric traditions of his age. After all, his major goal was not historical truthfulness but moral instruction. Consequently, several of his intellectual heroes were meant to be ideal types and paragons of different virtues and scholarly careers.

### *Adam's Method and Ideals*

Adam's apparently fuzzy methodology warrants much caution. To what degree can we use his biographies as sources on the lives of Renaissance learned men? To what extent should we attribute the values and visions expressed in them to Adam himself? In trying to provide a more precise answer to these questions than anything found in the earlier secondary literature, I offer analyses of passages from a few of the longer biographies.

Our general knowledge of Adam's life is probably more spotty and vague than the general picture provided by an average biography in his *Vitae*. We do not even know his exact date of birth (traditionally dated to 1575).<sup>16</sup> Adam came from a town in Silesia, Grodków (Grotkau, close to Wrocław/Breslau), and he studied for eight years in the grammar school of the neighboring town of Brzeg (Brieg), where he obtained the patronage of a local nobleman, which suggests that his parents could not support his continued study. He enrolled in the university in Heidelberg in 1598, and he received his M.A. two years later and then also studied some theology. Remaining in Heidelberg for the rest of his life, Adam found employment as a teacher in the city gymnasium, and from 1613 until his death in 1622, he held the office of rector. Writing biographies, thus, was his late-night hobby, not his job. He clearly had to work hard in order to write 546 bio-bibliographies in roughly five years while also attending to his teaching duties; in fact, in diligence, Adam approached even the greatest of his

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13 Ibid., 193, and Adam, *Vitae Germanorum Theologorum*,):( 7°.

14 See also Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*,):( 2°–4°.

15 Seidel, "Melchior Adams *Vitae*," 191–201.

16 See Flood, *Poets Laureate*, 20.

heroes. One hundred years later, his own biographer and critic Johann Gottlieb Krause offered the following recollection:

although the constitution of his body was weaker and his health was highly infirm throughout his life, he nevertheless never slept more than five or six hours, and he could spend whole nights or the breaks for eating sitting [at his desk] and copying texts useful to his work.<sup>17</sup>

Adam's interest in education and pedagogy seems to find expression in many of the biographies, which often put particular stress on the family backgrounds and education of the individuals on whom they focus. Moreover, many of his *virī illustri* worked, as he did, as teachers and pedagogues (at least for part of their lives). Yet, the question remains of the extent to which Adam used the biographies to express his own ideas about education.

In one of the longer lives included into the volume of "philosophers" on the humanist and theologian Johannes Rivius (1500–1553), the text dedicates a colorful description to the pedagogical methods of Rivius's teacher, Tilemannus Mylius, who practiced as a private teacher in Rivius's hometown, Attendorn. We find in Mylius, who is totally unknown to modern research, an extremely dedicated teacher who espoused the most advanced humanistic concepts about education, which would put even present-day teachers to the test. Rivius's master divided the day into periods for study, relaxation, gymnastics, and play, leaving no time for unruly behavior. He accommodated himself to childish playfulness in order not to make teaching annoying because of pedagogical rigor or the manners of an old man. He opened up his little garden for spiritual delights, and he turned the burden of learning into a charm. Leaving behind his *personae* as a theologian and an old man, he became a child again through playful learning.<sup>18</sup> No surprise that Rivius, who later also became a teacher in Annaberg, had similarly advanced pedagogical methods. He used modern books and a differentiated approach to his pupils. He taught the basics of Latin grammar in the vernacular, and he devoted particular attention to students who were struggling, not rigidly specifying the

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17 "Ob er gleich von schwacher Leibes-Constitution und die gantze Lebens-Zeit über sehr kräncklich gewesen, so hat er doch niemals über 5. oder 6. Stunden geschlaffen, auch wohl die gantze Nacht durch, oder die Tisch-Zeit über gesessen und dasjenige abgeschrieben, was zu seinem Vorhaben gedienet." Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine. Krause, "Von Melchioris Adami Vitis Eruditorum," 88.

18 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 149.

number of months or years needed for the study of a particular author, but adapting to the needs of the students, according to their talents and age.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, this knowledge of Rivius's alleged enthusiastic interest in modern pedagogy comes not from Adam, but from another humanist educator, Georgius Fabricius (1516–71), who was Adam's only source. Adam acknowledges Fabricius's authorship only at the very end of the text, which is an exact copy of Fabricius's work.<sup>20</sup> Unlike Heinrich Pantaleon, who included only a short summary of Fabricius's biography in his *Prosopographiae heroum atque illustrium virorum*, Adam loved his source so much that he quoted it word by word in its entirety.<sup>21</sup>

Another lengthy biography in the same volume is on one of the greatest educators of the century, the Silesian Valentin Trozendorf (1490–1556).<sup>22</sup> Trozendorf, Adam emphasizes, came from a family of peasants, and his father was a superstitious man who frequented the local monks, who discovered Valentin's talents. Despite paternal resentment, Valentin could thus leave his original environment and later study Latin and Greek with the greatest masters. Before moving to the University of Wittenberg, he was a teacher at the grammar school of Gorlice (Görlitz). He was so bright that he stood out among the teachers, to whom he was explaining nothing else but the bible of Renaissance educational thought, Plutarch's *The Education of Children*. Eventually, Trozendorf, who was apparently destined to be a teacher, found employment at the gymnasium of Złotoryja (Goldberg), and he famously transformed the school into a flourishing institution. At this point, Adam's biography turns into a history of Trozendorf's educational methods, and it explains in detail the famous Goldberg school order which he invented. His school was modelled on the Roman republic, and it used both seniority and democracy as organizational principles. Pupils competed with one another. In questions of discipline, they had to listen to their peers, who were their regularly reelected superiors.

Was the reason for including this long digression on 'Trozendorf' pedagogy the influence he had in Silesia and, in particular, on Adam's educational practice? It is difficult to tell. In any case, Adam must have been aware of the significance of Trozendorf in the creation of a strong grammar school tradition in Silesia,

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19 Ibid., 152.

20 It appeared in the front of Rivius's *Opera theologica omnia*: Rivius, *De vera et salutari Ecclesiae doctrina*.

21 Pantaleon's book appeared just a year after Fabricius's biography with the same publisher, Oporinus.

22 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 167–76. On Trozendorf, see Bauch, *Valentin Trozendorf*; Lubos, *Valentin Trozendorf*; Absmeier, *Das schlesische Schulwesen*, 100–29.



which was instrumental in the emergence of a collective identity of Silesian intellectuals.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, we might suspect that, in Trozendorf's case, Adam's biography again was determined by the sources available to him.<sup>24</sup>

Silesian humanist Joachim Cureus (1532–1573) was a student of Trozendorf. His life is told in the volume on doctors in another uniquely long narrative.<sup>25</sup> Here again, we have a long introduction on Cureus's education with a wealth of details concerning his father's legendary learning, despite the fact that he became a baker. Concerning the way Cureus, who was already a mature student, eventually became a doctor, we are told that "order" is an essential requirement in life, especially in studies. Cureus managed to acquire medical knowledge so quickly only because of his orderly method of studying. He always fixed clear goals and he restricted himself to precise areas of knowledge.<sup>26</sup> Once again, the reader might think these ideas are the fruit of Adam's teaching experience, but actually they harmonize with what Cureus says in the long preface and introduction to his book on physics.<sup>27</sup> However, Cureus's preface was not Adam's source; at the most, it was the source used by Johannes Ferinarius (1534–1602), another pedagogue, who published a detailed biography of Cureus in 1601.<sup>28</sup> Adam only abridged Ferinarius's *vita*, referring to it only at the very end of his text. All he did was to cut out entire paragraphs and add italics to some of the sentences he found especially relevant.

Another exceptionally long biography, this one on the life of the famous poet Helius Eobanus Hessus (1488–1540), was likewise motivated by the existence of a single biographical source, which Adam obviously highly valued: Joachim Camerarius's *Narratio de Helio Eobano Hesso* (1553). As the thorough analysis by Klaus-Dieter Beims has recently shown, Adam again relied heavily and uncritically on his main source (which was far too lengthy to be taken over entirely), even if he also used Hessus's letters (in Camerarius's edition), adding some further details to the narrative.<sup>29</sup>

23 See Absmeier, *Das schlesische Schulwesen*.

24 I have not been able to identify Adam's sources. The funeral oration by Adam Cureus on Valentin Trozendorf, once held in the University Library of Wrocław, was unfortunately among the documents which perished during World War II because of bombings.

25 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum medicorum*, 197–216.

26 Ibid., 201, 203.

27 Cureus, *Physica sive de sensibus et sensibilibus*.

28 Ferinarius, *Narratio historica*.

29 Beims, "Von den Grenzen einer frühneuzeitlichen Biographie."



This short investigation into the longer biographies suggests that we should be very careful not to jump to conclusions about Adam's own ideas or contributions. One gets the impression that Adam published longer biographies when he had access to existing biographies or other longer narratives which he found interesting and useful for his presentations of exemplary cases of lives. The accent on learning, education, and diligence was not necessarily an aspect of Adam's pedagogical career and interests but a natural attribute of the genre. After all, Adam's intention, presumably, was to memorialize people who stood out with their learning and intelligence.

It is ultimately this stress on education and diligence which appears to be one of the important distinguishing features of Renaissance biographies of learned men. This seems to be particularly true to Adam's work: whether his heroes came from poor, modest, or "honestly" prosperous families, their advancement in life was due entirely to their efforts, their education and learning, and their investment in studies, which sometimes enjoyed the support of their parents and patrons and sometimes did not. The question of how some learned men used their talents and rose above their peers to live lives of learning, cultivation, and rational thought seems to be the central issue behind Adam's monumental enterprise. The stress on the modest origins of many of the heroes and their talents and diligence fit the Renaissance ideology of virtue and the optimistic message about education turning potentially everyone into the architect of his own fortune.<sup>30</sup> In fact, for Adam, poor family origins were no cause for embarrassment. Where, for example, Camerarius asserted that Eobanus Hessus had been "born of parents who were not particularly wealthy but were famous above all else for their honesty, integrity and modesty," Adam simply states that, "although he had poor parents; they made sure to provide their sons a liberal education."<sup>31</sup> Likewise (just to mention another example), Adam asserts that both of Conrad Gesner's parents were poor, but were nevertheless known for their honesty and integrity. He adds later that Gesner "was not ashamed to learn the names of plants from peasants, or even frequently from petty women [...]. Peasants often have experience in all kinds of things, handed down from generation to generation."<sup>32</sup> Like many of his heroes, Adam came from a low

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30 Cf. with Beims, idem; Almási, "Educating the Christian prince."

31 Camerarius, *Narratio de Helio Eobano Hesso*, 8; Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 105. Poverty, however is a key motive also in Camerarius's text. See Beims, "Von den Grenzen einer frühneuzeitlichen Biographie," 389, 423.

32 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum medicorum*, 153.

social position, but thanks to his learning, he ascended. He came from a tiny town in Silesia and finished his life as a family man and rector of the Heidelberg city school.<sup>33</sup>

### *The Biography of Willem Canter (1542–1575)*

The person who shines out with his diligence even among the diligent is the Dutch humanist Willem Canter. Once again, Adam provides an exceptionally long biography (the second longest in his work), full of juicy anecdotal details which render it especially vivid.<sup>34</sup> We may rightly suspect again that Adam had access to a particular source, written by a person who knew Canter and undertook more profound research, informing the reader even about the exact hour of his birth and death. In fact, this person was Suffridus Petrus (1527–97), historian of Friesland, to whom Adam refers as his source at the very end of the text.<sup>35</sup> Adam took over Canter's life from Petrus's *De scriptoribus Frisiae* (1593), adding nothing to it, but cutting certain pages and paragraphs entirely (concerning mostly family and local history), which hardly changed the message of the original, but which did make it more focused.<sup>36</sup> Petrus knew Canter personally, and he admired him, but he was not one of his close contacts. He probably had some biographical

33 A surviving poem testifies to his wedding, see Flood, *Poets Laureate*, 20.

34 This biography is 17 pages long. Cf. with the longer lives of “philosophers” and “doctors”: Conrad Gesner had 26, Justus Lipsius 16, Johannes Crato 16, Kaspar Peucer 15, Martin Crusius 14, Johannes Rivius 13, Philip Melanchthon 13, Eobanus Hessus 13, Joachim Camerarius Jr. 13, Nicodemus Frischlin 12, Christophorus Longolius 12, Leonhard Fuchs 11, Jakob Schegk 11, Joachim Cureus 10, Paracelsus 10, Johannes Vischer 10, Valentin Trotzendorf 9, Wolfgang Meurer 9, Joachim Camerarius Sr. 8 pages.

35 Petrus, *De scriptoribus Frisiae*, 111–54. In the second edition (Franequerae: Jacobus Horreus, 1599), it is on pp. 189–260.

36 Adam cut the first few pages, which give a genealogy of the Canter family, mentioning also Erasmus's reference to this famous family. (This part also serves to justify why Petrus inserted Canter's biography in his edition on Frisian authors. Although he was born in Utrecht, the family also had Frisian branches. Coming from Leeuwarden, the grandfather had settled in Groningen, but Canter continued to have family possessions in Leeuwarden.) Adam then cut a mistaken reference to the library of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, of which Canter had once talked to Petrus, although he could not recall exactly what (p. 121). Next, a paragraph is cut on the dilemma of where to live in Leuven after his return (p. 122). Adam cut some parenthetical praise of Canter on p. 133. Pages 140–8 are cut entirely, as they do not fit. In relation to Canter's aim to move back to Frisia, this is where Petrus engages in local history, presenting the city of Leeuwarden and his hopes concerning Canter's arrival (which he hoped to boost in academic life in the city) and the potential foundation of a university. Cutting parts of pp. 150–1 (mentioned in the main text), Adam finally shortens Canter's bibliography (attached to the biography) in an unfortunate manner. Here we also have another reference to the relationship between Canter and Petrus, who in Leuven received Canter's notes, which were meant to be a contribution to Josias Simler's *Bibliotheca*.

sources on which he relied, but he also apparently based his work on the accounts of other eyewitnesses and on his own research.<sup>37</sup>

In Adam's edition, Canter's biography starts with an anecdote concerning the first year of his life which confirms Canter's predisposition to learning, making it obvious to everyone from the very beginning. Allegedly, he took great delight in books while still in the arms of his nurse, and when he burst into tears, the only way to console him was to allow him to touch and turn the pages of books.<sup>38</sup> His father, who was a schoolmaster, did everything to "cultivate this fertile ground" and not let Willem be spoiled by "womanly indulgence" by postponing his education until the age of seven, as commoners did.<sup>39</sup> Although this suggests that Canter was educated by women at home, Adam confirms that the father started actively occupying himself with the child while he was still in the cradle, providing him learning and discipline: *doctrinam disciplinamque*. Eventually, he sent his son to the Utrecht public school just before Canter turned six (precisely after Easter in 1548), which was not a particularly early age for schooling in the sixteenth century and does not really confirm the notion of the father's preoccupation with womanly corruption. At the Utrecht gymnasium, where Canter was taught by Georgius Macropedius, one of the best pedagogues and playwrights of the age, he progressed rapidly, and by the age of twelve he had learned Latin and Greek. His parents sent him to the University of Louvain, where he was tutored and looked after by another outstanding scholar, Cornelius Valerius, and where he lived in the house of a jurist for four years and then shortly in the Collegium Trilingue, learning here the basics of philological emendations.<sup>40</sup> In both places, Canter had excellent peers, whose work animated

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37 At the end of his biography, he lists the names of those who wrote funerary elegies on the death of Canter. He claims he would have preferred to add them to the bibliography, had he had the means to publish it independently. But since he had not had the means, he inserted Canter's life in his book on Frisian authors. This might also suggest that the manuscript elegies had been accompanied by a biography, which Petrus elaborated.

38 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 272. The author mentions Pindar, Plato, Vergil, and even Saint Athanasius of Alexandria as authors who themselves mentioned similar cases of a child showing early signs of great talent. Athanasius was one of the authors studied by Canter in his *Variae lectiones*.

39 Ibid., 272.

40 Since Canter studied for roughly four years in Leuven, it seems difficult to fit his short stay in the prestigious Collegium Trilingue here. This was probably invented because of the prestige of the institute and Canter's later expertise in ancient languages. On the other hand, in a letter written by Cornelius Valerius after Canter's death to Hugo Blotius, we are told that once he lived together with Canter, sharing even the same bedroom. This could have taken place after Canter's return to Leuven, but probably it was during his years of study. "Cum litterae tuae mihi redderetur, iam agebat animam vir utriusque linguae doctissimus atque optimus artibus ornatissimus, olim mihi carissimus discipulus domestica atque adeo, si ita loqui

mutual rivalry, while rivalry served as a motivation for study. This was all due to the special teaching method of Valerius, whose lectures, had they been printed, could be usefully read anywhere, although they could not be fully appreciated if one were unable to listen to his energetic and powerful voice. Valerius recognized Canter's talents and industry, and he realized that he would never regret praising him publicly and privately. Canter was still 16 when, in 1559, he traveled to study in Paris, where he remained until August 1562. France was followed by a tour in Germany and Italy, though Canter traveled not as a tourist, but rather in order to collect ancient Greek manuscripts. Canter, we are told, also lived in Basel, where he published his first works. He then settled and lived in Leuven for eight years.

It is convenient to interrupt our presentation of Canter's life at this point and call attention to the first signs of the constructed nature of Petrus's biography. On the one hand, the anecdote about the baby consoled by books does not appear to be Petrus's invention. Otherwise, he would not have called attention to the tradition of this topos in the literature of antiquity. Like in hagiographies, in which infant saints were often recognized as having a religious calling, humanist biographies often pointed out some early signs of a life of learning to come. Although these anecdotes served to enhance the credibility of the narrative, they were in fact topical. On the other hand, some details concerning Canter's education appear to fall back on Erasmus's *De pueris instituendis*. In this famous book, Erasmus actually points out the "Frisian Canter family" as a unique example of good education in the family, which naturally did not go unnoticed by the Frisian nationalist Petrus, who was very interested in questions of education.<sup>41</sup> He alluded to this in the first pages of his biography, which Adam omitted as they concerned the history of the Canter family.<sup>42</sup> It was probably this Erasmian reference to the advanced educational methods of the Canter family that justified Petrus's borrowing from the *De pueris instituendis*. His claim that baby Willem was only consoled by books could easily go back to an anecdote of a little boy mentioned by Erasmus.<sup>43</sup> Petrus's affirmation that, at an early stage, Willem was taken out of an environment in which women were prominent and was looked

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liceat, cubiculari consuetudine coniunctissimus Gulielmus Canterus, ac triduo fere post de hac vita ad superos migravit cuius excessus mihi tristissimus accidit." Dated May 27, 1575, Leuven. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vindob. 9737z14–8 II f. 68. (This means that Valerius, who received Blotius's letter on May 13, dates the death of Canter to May 16, although it happened on May 18.)

41 See his emended and annotated edition and translation of Plutarch's *The Education of Children* (Plutarchus, *Opusculum de Educandis Liberis*), published in Basel, where Canter would soon also appear.

42 Petrus, *De scriptoribus Frisiae*, 112; Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," 52.

43 Erasmus, "De pueris instituendis," 67.

after personally by his father is very much in line with what Erasmus advises prospective parents to do in his book. Likewise, the accent on the beneficial role of rivalry and the role of emulation in Canter's education also appears to reflect Erasmus's educational advice.

The presentation of Willem Canter's education and study tours (which remain a draft only) is followed by a caesura in the biography, indicated by Canter's eventual decisions to settle in Leuven. Some years, spent probably mostly in Basel, are silently passed over, and we are told that the further (or the last) eight years of Canter's life took place in Leuven.<sup>44</sup> The major part of the biography is dedicated to these uneventful years. It gives a lengthy account of Adam's everyday life and daily routine of disciplined work and it is expressive of an unconcealed admiration for Canter's ascetic and asexual mind. As we learn, upon his return to Leuven, Canter decided to live in rooms rented from honest landlords. Petrus was apparently embarrassed by this choice of lifestyle, so he underlines that Canter lived independently from his hosts, and he rented both a room and the servants. This was convenient, he argues, as Canter had all the advantages of the maids' services but had no responsibility over human resources. The servants' duties included doing Canter's daily shopping. Once a week, they received a list of the food he wanted each day, and they had to give an account of each individual expense weekly. This way, Canter prescribed for himself a diet that was entirely in harmony with both his constitution and his studies. It was neither lowly nor luxurious; it only served to keep him in good health. "He wanted to eat in order to live, and not as many people do, to live in order to eat."<sup>45</sup>

Canter woke up in the morning at 7 o'clock (this was relatively late, as scholars usually woke up between 4 and 5 a.m.<sup>46</sup>), as he claimed that early morning study was not for him. He worked until half past ten, when he would stop for an hour, go for a walk in the garden, or, if the weather was bad, somewhere else, contemplating the reading he had done and building an

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44 There are two surviving letters by Canter dated from Frankfurt, where Canter went because of the book fairs: to Marc-Antoine Muret from the autumn fair of 1564 (Muretus, *Epistolae*, 78–79); to Joachim Camerarius from the autumn fair of 1567 (Freitag, *Virorum doctorum epistolae*, 71–73).

45 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 276. Cf. with Bullinger, *Studiorum ratio*, 1:18, where the original sentence ("esse oportet ut vivas non vivere ut edas") is quoted, which goes back to *Auctor ad Herennium* 4.28.39. But see also Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* 9.3.85 and Gellius 19.2.7, who ascribes the maxim to Socrates.

46 See Engammare, *On Time, Punctuality, and Discipline*, passim, and the very informative notes on the daily routines of scholars by Peter Stotz in Bullinger, *Studiorum ratio*, 2:54–61.

appetite for lunch.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, the servants set the table. After lunch, he either continued with a light walk or had a chat with likeminded men. He then finally lay down on a settee in his study and slept for an hour. Refreshed, he went back to his studies and usually used the afternoon for writing<sup>48</sup> until the sun set in the winter or until seven o'clock in the summer. He then took another walk, but in order to avoid wasting time, he used these late afternoon walks to tend to his affairs. Back at home, he worked until midnight, using "the remaining, or less useful hours" (*horas supervacuas et minus utiles*), as he "used to call" them:

He generally used these hours for extraordinary things. If there were something to investigate, compare, discuss, annotate in order to resolve the tasks of the following day; if he had to do something unexpectedly in addition to his daily tasks, for instance respond to letters he had received or satisfy friends who had asked some favor, or something similar, whatever it was, he assigned them all the same to these hours. When he finished these tasks, he made an account of the day for himself, and once he had diligently calculated [what he had done], he went to bed, saying long prayers and commending himself to almighty God. Of each of his activities he kept a strict account with an hourglass to the point that he set the precise amount of time [to be spent on them], to let not even nature itself put him under pressure in other ways than he himself prescribed.<sup>49</sup>

At this point, we are finally able to define one of the sources on which Petrus drew. A few pages later, he even names it, referring to Canter's preface in an edition and translation of Stobaeus's *Physics*. Canter remembers that the emendation of the corrupt Greek manuscript, which even lacked punctuation marks, demanded much more labor than its translation into Latin, which he performed in a few months, during the "the remaining, or less useful hours"

47 See how Socrates got an appetite for lunch by walking, narrated in Athenaeus of Naucratis, *Deipnosophists*, 4.46. Compare with Bullinger's advice (where Socrates is similarly mentioned) in Bullinger, *Studiorum ratio*, 1:18.

48 This we learn only later on, see Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 280.

49 "His enim nihil ordinarium agere consueverat: sed si quid vel ad postridiani pensi absolutionem investigandum, conferendum, discutiendum, adnotandum esset, vel si quid extra diurnum pensum de improvviso obiectum fuisset, puta si litteris acceptis respondendum, si petitionibus amicorum gratificandum, si quid huius generis aliud agendum esset, id quicquid esset, in has horas simul coniciebat, quo absoluto exacti diei rationes a se ipse reposcebat, iisque diligenter ad calculum revocatis fuisque precibus lectum petens, Deo optimo maximo se commendabat. Omnes autem actiones suas tam stricte ad clepsammidium reuocaverat, adeoque certis ac statutis temporum intervallis alligarat, ut ne ipsa quidem natura aliis, quam sibi destinatis necessitatem suam flagitaret." Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 276.



(*horis aliquot supervacuis ac minus utilibus*), in altogether not more than 136 hours, if he were asked to give a precise account, *si res ad calculum vocetur*.<sup>50</sup>

Apparently, disciplining the mind and disciplining the body were two sides of the same coin. Having specified Canter's disciplined use of time, Petrus goes on to give further detail on his diet. Canter, we are told, had only one proper meal a day. If he were hungry in the evening, which was rarely the case, he dipped some bread into wine. When people wondered about this strange habit, he responded that it was the result of deliberate and gradual experimentation, and one meal was just what his body needed, as "nature is satisfied with little."<sup>51</sup> This asceticism also implied that Canter could not accept invitations and never invited guests in order not to be bothered in his eating habits. Furthermore, he also fasted twice a year for health reasons. No wonder that Canter, as someone who was so frugal with time, was not very social and could rarely find time for friends.<sup>52</sup> Like his father and grandfather, he had very few of them. He also completely avoided women and was embarrassed by obscenities.

### *The Construction of an Ideal Type: Canter, the Paragon of Hard Work*

As we have seen, Canter is described by Petrus on the basis of the few facts Petrus actually knew about his life as a secular hermit and a paragon of the philosophical life. His biography was that of an ideal humanist, an extremely hardworking, learned, and civilized person who was raised and who lived in accordance with Erasmian principles. The animal that lives in every human being was in Canter completely under control: he was fully rational and disciplined. Soon before dying, he decided to move from Leuven to the north of Holland, but his decision was not prompted by emotional considerations. He simply wanted to reduce his expenses by living in a cheaper place and making greater profits off of his estates by being closer to them.<sup>53</sup> Although his daily routine was apparently still influenced by the practices characteristic of the Christian monk, his life was that of an urban intellectual, a new version of the monk, who was singularly responsible for all his deeds to no one else but God. We are

50 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 282. Canter received the manuscript of this book from the library of the Hungarian humanist Johannes Sambucus. Cf. Almási and Kiss, *Humanistes du bassin des Carpates*, 199.

51 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 277. See for this stereotype, for example, the colloquy between a soldier and a Carthusian by Erasmus, *All the Familiar Colloquies*, 174.

52 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 278.

53 This part seems to argue against Petrus's authorship.

told that he was dedicated purely to self-imposed study, independently of any worldly or ecclesiastical obligations and expectations. With the excuse that his voice was weak, Canter never took up teaching at Leuven, in part because he believed he made better use of his time by writing than by teaching. He despised ecclesiastical offices, as he believed that the people who held such benefices should also work for their money and perform some religious service (*altari servire*).<sup>54</sup> He quietly lived off of his patrimony, and as he was as parsimonious with money as he was with time, he was even able to set aside savings.

That Canter's life represented an ideal type was recognized also by a late book, Nathaniel Wanley's *The Wonders of the Little World: Or, A General History of Man* by (1673). Canter is remembered in Chapter 42 ("Of such Persons as were of Skill in the Tongues") in the following way: "One says of him: 'If any would desire a specimen of a studious person, and one who had wholly devoted himself to the advancement of learning, he may find it exactly expressed in the person of Gulielmus Canterus'."<sup>55</sup> The author of these words was in fact Suffridus Petrus, who began his biography with this sentence, which Adam curiously omitted, along with the rest of the first pages.

Canter was then consciously described as the archetype of the "studious person," and he was also received as such. Another example comes from a two-distich poem by the librarian and historian of the Spanish Netherlands, Aubertus Miraeus (Aubert Le Mire), canon of the Antwerp cathedral. The poem accompanied a woodcut portrait of Canter by Philips Galle and was printed in Miraeus's *Illustrium Galliae Belgicae scriptorum icones et elogi* (1604),<sup>56</sup> a biographic and poetic album illustrated by portraits.<sup>57</sup> Miraeus's poem affixed to Canter's image starts with the question: "Clepsydra quid signat," or, "what does a clepsydra (water clock) signal?" Miraeus responded, "You used this instrument to measure [the length of] your studies, You, other Pliny," referring to the story of Canter's keeping a strict account of his activities with an hourglass.

54 Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 278.

55 Wanley refers to an unnamed source here. I am quoting from the London edition of 1806 (vol. 2), p. 370.

56 The woodcut can be found in the holdings of the Rijksmuseum or the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (available online in both places). The 1609 edition, which I used, does not contain Canter's portrait. Miraeus, *Elogia Belgica*.

57 This was another collective anthology, which, unlike most of its sixteenth-century predecessors, was organized according to a new national agenda. A decade later, Canter, appropriated by the Frisian Petrus, is claimed back by the Belgian Miraeus, only to be included among Adam's Germans one decade later.



It is obvious that Miraeus worked with Petrus's biography.<sup>58</sup> In fact, his book (which was not always sold with the portraits) also contained a short biography on Canter, which was more or less an extract from Petrus's *vita*.<sup>59</sup> Having detailed Canter's studies and study tour, Miraeus introduces the part on Canter's daily routine in the following manner:

When he returned through Germany to Leuven, he gave himself over entirely to studies so immoderately that people believed he was hastening his death. His day was divided among certain activities in a way that he studied one thing in the morning and another in the afternoon hours. Pliny the Younger writes and boasts of his Pliny [the Elder] in a similar way; however, you would call him [Pliny] idle and lazy when compared with this assiduous and indefatigable mind.<sup>60</sup>

Miraeus goes on to explain that Canter determined the amount of days and hours to be spent on each of his tasks. You would not believe it, he adds, had he not written about it himself in the preface to Stobaeus's *Physics*.

Miraeus's reading of Canter's biography is a useful guide for further analysis. First, we notice the crucial function of the reference to Canter's preface to the edition of Stobaeus. Without that testimony, Miraeus claimed, one would not believe the biographer. But did Petrus construct the entire myth of an extremely time-conscious and disciplined person based on this single source? We may well ask this question in part because Petrus, as we have seen, used the very words Canter had used in the Stobaeus-preface. Miraeus must also have become suspicious about the constructed nature of Canter's image, which was probably confirmed by his association about Pliny the Younger's famous letter on Pliny the Elder. Had Petrus not quoted the Stobaeus-preface, Miraeus might have stated that his entire story went back to Pliny.

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58 Henry Hallam, a nineteenth-century author of a history of early modern literature, dedicated a page to Canter's philology, observing that "the life of Canter in Melchior Adam is one of the best his collection contains; it seems to be copied from one by Miraeus." Hallam, *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, 19. Adam did not copy Miraeus here, but his book might have been one of the publications that prompted him to write his own work on Germans. Adam knew and used Miraeus (for example, his biography of Cornelius Valerius was based on him), but certainly neither agreed with Miraeus's new "national" or with his Catholic perspective (Miraeus mixed religious, ecclesiastical, and professional criteria when grouping his learned men).

59 Miraeus, *Elogia Belgica*, 127–28.

60 "Post Lovanium per Germaniam reversus, tam immodice studiis totum se tradidit, ut mortem porperasse credatur. In certas operas diem ita partiebatur, ut alia ante meridiem, promeridianis horis alia studia tractaret. Simile de Plinio suo scribit et iactat alter Plinius; atqui ignavum et desidem illum dixeris, si cum hoc assiduo atque indefesso ingenio compares." Ibid., 127.

In fact, Pliny's epistle 3.5 written on Uncle Pliny must have been a well-known source of the image of an extremely time-conscious scholar;<sup>61</sup> the key person in popularizing this letter was again Erasmus.<sup>62</sup> In this epistle, the story of Pliny's daily routine and frenzied time-management is directly linked to the question of how Pliny managed to be so extremely productive (in addition to having public offices and working as the emperor's councilor). In a similar manner, Canter's image as a uniquely hardworking scholar is constructed in relation to his exceptional philological expertise and extreme productivity, considering especially his early death (the biographer emphasizes that he had not yet turned 33 when he died).<sup>63</sup> Unlike Canter, Pliny the Elder was an early bird: his "day starts long before the crack of dawn, up in full darkness and lamplight from fall through winter, seasonally adjusted back to the dead of night; then [before daybreak] out to call on his 'friend' the emperor (another night creature), and other obligations, before returning home."<sup>64</sup> After lunch, Pliny would do book work, "featuring notes and lemmata." This was followed by sunbathing, which he spent reading and taking notes, then a cold bath, the only moment of relaxation, since for the rest of bath time, while he was being rubbed down and toweled dry, he was again listening to or dictating a book. Then came dinner, spent with work, and more work until he retired before dark in summertime or one hour after sunset in the winter, "as though some law dictated it" (*tamquam aliqua lege cogente*). In brief, Canter was as much a "Time Scrooge"<sup>65</sup> as Pliny the Elder. This is highlighted, as in Canter's bibliography, by anecdotal details:

I remember one of his friends pulled up the reader when he'd mispronounced something and had it repeated: my uncle said to him, "You did understand?" When he nodded, "So why pull him up? We've lost ten verses plus through your interrupting." [...] I recall myself being reprimanded by him—why walk?: "You had the chance," he said,

61 See Henderson, "Knowing Someone through their Books"; Enenkel, "Vita als Instrument," 55–56.

62 See Engammare, *On Time, Punctuality, and Discipline*, 82.

63 Another well-known classical source of disciplined time-management, as Karl Enenkel has pointed out, was Suetonius's life of Augustus, but Pliny's image certainly had a stronger influence on the fashioning of the image of the busy scholar. See *ibid.*, 55; Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen*, 348–49.

64 I am quoting Henderson's paraphrase, "Knowing Someone," 266–67.

65 John Henderson's words on Pliny, *ibid.*, 263, translating "tanta erat parsimonia temporis." Cf. with "parcissimus dispensator temporis" in Canter's biography. Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 278.

“to waste not these hours.” You see, he reckoned all time “wasted” that was not invested in study.<sup>66</sup>

“We can measure the madness very precisely” through these anecdotes, comments Henderson, their translator. It is not difficult to think of Canter again, who used even his recreational walk to tend to business and who measured all his scholarly activities with the hourglass, not even letting “nature itself put him under pressure in other ways than he himself prescribed.” In other words, he also used the toilet in a regular, disciplined way.<sup>67</sup>

Clearly, like Pliny, Canter was a workaholic. Both worked too much. Miraeus, as we have said, must have had the same impression: “he gave himself over entirely to studies so *immoderately* that people believed he was hastening his death,” he commented, a remark which does not harmonize with the description of Canter’s time-management which followed these words. Apparently, despite all the efforts of the biographer to counter the plausible claim about Canter’s self-destructive work, we are not entirely convinced. In fact, Petrus’s very insistence on the healthiness of Canter’s regimen may raise further suspicion. When Canter, we are told, needed once to defend his diet in front of his friends, his healthy appearance lent credibility to his words: He was fit, or as Petrus put it, “his limbs were energetic,” his face was not pale like that of the scholar, but rather had a natural color. Not long before his death, he allegedly also told some friends that he had not been sick for nine years. However, the description of his early death (after many months of fever) prompts one to throw into question this notion of his general good health and suggests that perhaps, in the end, he worked himself to death. One of his few surviving letters, written less than four years before his death, also confirms that he had serious health issues. He complains in the letter that he abused his body with too much work, which he could no longer bear, and he therefore needed to be more health-conscious.<sup>68</sup>

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66 “memini quendam ex amicis, cum lector quaedam perperam pronuntiasset, revocasse et repeti coegisse; huic avunculum meum dixisse ‘intellexeras nempe?’ cum ille adnuisset, ‘cur ergo revocabas? decem amplius versus hac tua interpellatione perdidimus’ [...] repeti me correptum ab eo, cur ambulare, ‘poteras’ inquit ‘has horas non perdere.’ nam perire omne tempus arbitrabatur, quod studiis non impenderetur.” Quoted by Henderson, *ibid.*, 261, trans. by Henderson, *ibid.*, 263.

67 A further analogy between Pliny’s letter and Canter’s biography is the way in which Pliny the Younger extrapolated his story from a few lines of Pliny the Elder’s preface to his *Natural History*. See again Henderson, *idem*, 274–77.

68 “Verumtamen, quod recte me monent literae tuae, valetudini meae deinceps consulere cogar, quandoquidem tantam studiorum contentionem, quanta sum per annos aliquot usus, non amplius haec fert aetas, tametsi non grandis (ut quae tricesimum annum nondum attigerit) multis tamen laboribus valde iam

If Petrus had wanted to add color to the narrative of Canter's daily routine, it would not have been very difficult to look for more recent examples. One has good reason to assume Ficino's *De triplici vitae* and Bullinger's *Studiorum ratio* were among his sources.<sup>69</sup> Ficino suggested that the scholar get up one or two hours before sunrise and start the day with some delicate massage of the body and then spend half an hour at least getting clean. The scholar should then sit down to study, but he should interrupt his work roughly every hour (for example, by combing his hair 40 times). Concentration needs interruptions, otherwise it is tiring and unhealthy. Lunch should be at noon, but one could also postpone it to as late as 2 o'clock. While morning study should be spent inventing or composing new things, the "rest of the hours" are for reading "old things" (the classics).<sup>70</sup> Addressing his book mainly to future members of the clergy, Bullinger advises they start the day not with massage but with prayer.<sup>71</sup> Also, Bullinger recommends waking up early in the morning (at 3 or 4 o'clock) and leaving oneself enough time to get up. One should, however, avoid waking up too early and then wasting the early afternoon snoozing. At 8 o'clock, the scholar or the churchman should take a break by straightening up and doing some necessary domestic work, and he should also take a short walk so as to have a good appetite for lunch. Wise men agree that studying after lunch is unhealthy, in particular for one's vision, so in practice, Bullinger suggests the double break observed in Canter's case.<sup>72</sup> The period of digestion should be spent taking a walk in the city or engaging in some other form of bodily exercise. At 1 o'clock, the scholar can finally return to his studies and spend time with easier reads, like works of history or poetry, unlike in the morning, which should be dedicated to theology or philosophy. These are also the hours suitable for doing some writing. At 4 o'clock, it is time to get up again, do domestic work, and rekindle one's appetite. After dinner, one should do some light reading (like Gellius, Quintilian, or Cicero), but not more than one

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affecta." Letter to the physician Crato von Krafftheim of 24 August 1571. Biblioteka Uniwersytecka we Wrocławiu, R 246, no. 414.

69 See Engammare, *On Time, Punctuality, and Discipline*, 84–89.

70 Ficino, *Sulla vita* (book 1, chapter 8), 114–16.

71 Bullinger also suggests the text of the prayer for those who cannot invent one for themselves. One should ask God for wisdom, intellect, and memory (among other things) in order to understand God's law, fear only God, and acquire real learning, with which one may be of use to God and the state. Bullinger, *Studiorum ratio*, 1:10.

72 Erasmus also recommends beginning to work early in the day and taking walks (though he got up late because of sleeping problems) in his "Diluculum" and "De ratione studii epistola protreptica," in Erasmus, *Collected Works*, 40:916–24 and 25:192–94. See the excellent notes of Peter Stotz in Bullinger, *Studiorum ratio*, 2:58–59.

hour, as night work causes sleeplessness and has other unwanted effects.<sup>73</sup> Like Ficino, Bullinger also continues with advice on diet, thus serving as a model for Canter's biographer in this respect too.

The rhetorical strategies used to construct an image of Canter as a Herculean laborer may be frequently observed in other sixteenth-century biographies. In the biography of Christophorus Longolius (Christophe de Longueil) (1490–1522), who like Canter died early (at the age of 32), the story of self-controlled hard work is less central and elaborate, but it follows similar patterns. Longolius read so much and developed such refined views in so few years and so unusually early that it seemed hardly credible to people who knew nothing about his way of life, which was typified by total self-control (*temperantia summa*). While others dedicated much of their time to pleasures, especially in those times, he would not waste a minute on indulgences. He would eat and drink sparingly, and he consumed only diluted wine, preferring chiefly cold food had doctors not advised him against it. He was parsimonious also with sleep, sleeping six hours at the most.<sup>74</sup>

In the same volume of philosophers, we read much the same about the life of the Greek scholar Martin Crusius (1526–1607). Crusius was also moderate both in general and in his diet, imitating nature, which is satisfied with little. Yet, intellectual work did no harm to his physical constitution; Crusius was as strong as was Longolius or Canter, but unlike Canter, he was also social. He was amusing and courteous company during work dinners, but he remained the most moderate on these occasions. As for his work regimen (*studiorum ratio*), both in winter and summer Crusius studied from 5 a.m. until lunch and carried on right after lunch until dinner. After dinner he continued “reading and writing letters and books” until 10 p.m. His attraction to letters was an early thing, as was true in Canter's case. His mother allegedly noted that he wrote characters in the dust before he was even able to walk.<sup>75</sup>

In the biography of Guillaume Budé (1468–1540), a master of Longolius, written by Louis Le Roys in the year of Budé's death, we learn that Budé worked

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73 Neither Erasmus (“De ratione studii epistola protreptica,” *ibid.*, 193) nor Ficino (*Sulla vita*, 115) suggests working at night. However, in the *Ciceronianus*, where in the person of Nosoponus Erasmus ridicules the scholar who overacts his scholarly *persona*, it is recommended to write “in the dead of the night.” Erasmus, *Collected Works*, 28:351. See Algazi, “Scholars in Households,” 30.

74 Yet, the biographer made sure not to exaggerate about Longolius's scholarly image. He stressed that he remained interested in public matters and did not neglect bodily exercises either, playing a little with a ball every day before dinner. Adam, *Vitae Germanorum philosophorum*, 50–51.

75 *Ibid.*, 492–93.

three hours even on the day of his wedding. His only pleasure was working on the writings of ancient authors, and he never shunned relevant labor or quit work on a book in the middle. According to an anecdote, the president of the Parisian council lived in his neighborhood, but he never bumped into him in the streets and he never saw him at public feasts, when neighbors usually gathered at the entrances to their houses. He never even saw him during afternoon walks or among the men who were simply watching passersby, since Budé did not allow himself any time away from work, not even a short day off. He played neither with dice or with the ball, as most people did during holidays, but worked. After waking up in the morning, he started studying and did not stop until lunch. Before sitting down to eat, he exercised by taking a short walk. After lunch, he spent about two hours talking to people, and he then continued his studies until his late and moderate dinner, which he consumed not for pleasure but rather merely to satisfy his natural hunger.<sup>76</sup>

### Conclusions

As James Weiss and Karl Enenkel have wisely stated, biographies and autobiographies are “selectively composed artifacts” which “construct and constitute people.”<sup>77</sup> The life of Canter was one such artifact, one image of a figure who embodied disciplined hard work. In the work ethic it aimed to transmit, the accent was on *both* diligence and discipline. The ideal was not immoderate labor fueled by irrational passions, but work done by a disciplined rational mind. Canter’s example showed the very limits of a man’s mental productivity, to which learned men could still aspire. He did the maximum of work one could still normally perform without damaging one’s physical and mental balance.

The work ethic promoted by the biographies of learned men was a Renaissance invention influenced by both ancient (Stoic) and medieval (ascetic) models. In the hands of Renaissance men, it essentially became a secular, urban ethic of particular lay groups. From the sixteenth and especially the seventeenth century on, Calvinism (and other denominations to a lesser degree) gave further sanction to it. Among Renaissance merchants and learned men, its primary function was to legitimate social rise, forming an integral part of the ethic of virtue, which was the ruling ideology of fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century

76 Regius, *G. Budaei viri Clarissimi vita*, 15–16. Also see Enenkel, “Vita als Instrument,” 53.

77 Weiss, “Friendship and rhetoric,” 48; Enenkel, *Erfindung des Menschen*, 37. Both are quoted by Beims, “Von den Grenzen einer frühneuzeitlichen Biographie,” 349–51.

political elites.<sup>78</sup> In the case of Canter, disciplined hard work was the symbol of selfless sacrifice made by a learned man in the interest of the advancement of learning and the furthering of a better (less passionate, more rational and civilized) society.

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78 See Hankins, *Virtue Politics*.



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